

## **The Need for Information**

Over the last twenty five years, technological advances in the sport of fishing have increased the efficiency of anglers. However, the change in communications media, mainly the internet, has perhaps had the most profound impact on the sport, by significantly reducing the learning curve. “Paying your dues” in the form of hundreds of hours spent on the water trying to solve the puzzle of fishing, is no longer a requirement. Finding where to fish, when to go and what to use has become easier.

It’s been said that ten percent of the fishermen catch ninety percent of the fish. That statement may have been true in the past, but a larger percentage of today’s anglers are more knowledgeable about their quarry, more efficient in their pursuits, and as a result more successful. Fishing pressure is more intense not only due to an increase in the number of anglers, but also because of the improved ability of those anglers to catch fish.

In addition to the actual equipment anglers use to pursue their favorite species, information has become an equally important commodity. Nowhere is information more available and easy to access than on the internet. From on-line publications, to instructional videos, to forums dedicated to every angling topic imaginable, it’s all there at the click of a mouse. For many, on-line research has become almost as much a part of the fishing experience as actual time spent on the water.

Most people who fish love to share information, and the internet has become the mechanism for exchanging those ideas. Anglers used to get their information on the dock or in their local tackle store, chatting up the locals and old-timers. It took time to develop a relationship with these folks to the point where they were comfortable sharing their knowledge. Today, on-line forums provide a more efficient, albeit less personal and sometimes, unfortunately, questionable source of information. You now can learn such technical skills as rigging ballyhoo, pulling a dredge, or tying a Bimini twist all by watching a computer screen from the comfort of your own home.

More than traditional media outlets such as magazines and newspapers, the internet has generated interest in fisheries which previously drew little attention from recreational anglers. For example, bottom fishing off South Carolina, especially for snapper and grouper, was once the domain of commercial fishermen. Almost as if someone turned a switch, the number of recreational participants began to increase. Now we commonly see recreational and commercial boats anchored up on the ledge within close proximity.

Anglers are more knowledgeable of the scientific and management aspects of specific species and fisheries. This increased understanding has resulted in anglers becoming more involved in the regulatory process.

During this time of year, when the weather often prevents us from getting out on the water, the internet can serve as a proxy to actually fishing. However, for all the internet provides, nothing beats the knowledge gained from time spent on the water, or the memories that are made from the actual experience.

